

FREQUENTLY ASKED FLU QUESTIONS

What is Influenza (the "Flu") ?

A viral infection characterized by sudden onset of fever, sore throat, dry cough, headache, muscle aches, and fatigue which may last 7 – 14 days;

Pneumonia and other serious complications may also develop, especially in the elderly and the medically at risk.

Influenza Viruses may cause worldwide outbreaks of disease that can result in serious illness and death in high risk groups.

Who should receive an October Influenza Vaccine?

- Anyone over 65 years of age
- Children (over 6 mos.)
 - Children and adolescents (to age 18 yrs.) being treated for long periods with acetylsalicylic acid (aspirin).
- Adults with the following medical conditions:
 - Chronic heart, lung or kidney disease;
 - Diabetes mellitus or other metabolic disease;
 - Cancer, anemia, or hemoglobinopathy;
 - Persons whose immune systems are damaged or suppressed, such as those with HIV or AIDS, those having splenectomy, or malfunctioning spleens, or those receiving chemotherapy;
- Staff of acute care hospitals
- Emergency service workers - fire, police ambulance
- Home care workers
- Health Unit Staff
- Other health care providers, working institutions or the community
- People planning on traveling Internationally

Those individuals that are not within the high risk guidelines above can wait until November to receive their Influenza and/or Pneumonia vaccine.

When should Influenza Vaccine be given?

Annually in late October or November, as the vaccine only gives protection for 4 ½ to 6 months.

Each year a new flu vaccine is made which includes the three viruses that are expected to cause most of the influenza infection during the upcoming flu season. This year, vaccine will protect against the Moscow A, New Caledonia A and the Hong Kong B strains of Influenza.

What are the common side effects to this vaccine?

Some redness, swelling or soreness in the arm where the needle was given;

Slight Fever, fatigue, or muscle aches may occur in some individuals.

Who should not receive this vaccine?

Persons with any illness with fever;

Persons with a severe allergy to eggs;

Persons with severe allergy to any component in the vaccine.

A severe allergic reaction, although rare, may occur following the use of this or any vaccine. Therefore, it is necessary to remain in the building for at least 10 minutes after the injection has been given.

Some Physicians counsel against receiving an Influenza vaccine if you are pregnant. Consult your doctor before getting any vaccinations.